

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1 - 6. (Canceled)

1           7. (Currently amended): In a relational database, a method for accessing  
2 information in accordance with an access policy, said method comprising:  
3           providing ~~at least one query comprising~~ a SELECT statement, said SELECT  
4 statement having a select clause comprising one or more column references, each column  
5 reference identifying a specific column in said relational database;  
6           replacing at least one of said one or more column references with a mask function  
7 to produce a modified query having modified column references from which columns in a query  
8 result are selected, said modified columns being determined based on said access policy; and  
9           producing a query result in response to said modified query, said query result  
10 comprising one or more rows of information, each row comprising data selected from columns  
11 identified by said modified column references,  
12           wherein some rows of information comprise entirely of information from said  
13 relational database, and other rows of information comprise information from said relational  
14 database and a mask value, depending on said access policy.

8. (Currently amended): The method of claim 7 wherein said at least one query further comprises a WHERE clause, said method further including modifying said WHERE clause to produce a modified WHERE clause which includes a filter function, said filter function producing one of two logical values, said modified WHERE clause effective for deleting a row from said query result based on a value produced by said filter function.

1                   9. (Currently amended): The method of claim 7 wherein said relational  
2 database is provided in a database server; said step of providing includes receiving said at least  
3 one query at a client system; and said step of producing includes transmitting said modified  
4 query to said database server.

1                   10. (Original): The method of claim 9 wherein said step of replacing is  
2 performed at said client system.

1                   11. (Original): The method of claim 9 wherein said step of replacing is  
2 performed at said database server.

12 - 20.           (Canceled)

1                   21. (New): In a relational database, an access method comprising:  
2 receiving a database query to access at least one table in said relational database,  
3 said database query statement comprising a SELECT clause and a FROM clause, said SELECT  
4 clause identifying one or more first columns, said FROM clause identifying a table that  
5 comprises said one or more columns;

6                   replacing one or more of said first columns with mask functions to produce a  
7 modified database query statement; and  
8                   producing a query result based on said modified database query statement.

1                   22. (New): The method of claim 21 wherein said database query further  
2 comprises a WHERE clause, wherein said replacing does not change said WHERE clause.

1                   23. (New): The method of claim 21 wherein said relational database is  
2 provided in a database server, wherein said receiving is performed at a client system.

1                   24. (New): The method of claim 23 wherein said replacing is performed at  
2 said client system.

1           25. (New): The method of claim 23 wherein said replacing is performed at  
2    said database server.

1           26. (New): The method of claim 23 wherein said replacing is performed in  
2    accordance with an access policy.

1           27. (New): A computer-based information retrieval system comprising:  
2    a relational database comprising one or more tables;  
3    a first computer system operative to access said relational database,  
4    said first computer system further operative to:

5           receive a database query comprising a SELECT clause and a FROM  
6    clause, said SELECT clause comprising one or more column references; and  
7           replace one or more of said column references with mask functions to  
8    produce a modified database query,

9           wherein said relational database is accessed in accordance with said modified  
10   database query to produce a query result.

1           28. (New): The computer-based information retrieval system of claim 27  
2    further comprising a second computer system, wherein said first computer system is further  
3    operative to transmit said modified database query to said second computer system, wherein said  
4    second computer system is operative to access said relational database, said second computer  
5    system thereby producing said query result.

1           29. (New): The computer-based information retrieval system of claim 28  
2    wherein said first computer is a client system and said second computer system is a database  
3    server system.

1           30. (New): The computer-based information retrieval system of claim 28  
2    wherein said first computer system is in data communication with said relational database to  
3    produce said query result in accordance with said modified database query.

1           31. (New): The computer-based information retrieval system of claim 27  
2    wherein said database query further comprises a WHERE clause.